

## CLUSTER CHARACTERISTICS

Historically, Cluster 5's land use and development have combined job centers (located along rail corridors, major roadways and the riverfront) with neighborhoods and neighborhood serving commercial areas. While Cluster 5 faces some substantial challenges as a result of this mixed land use pattern, it also offers a number of outstanding assets, including:

- its location at an important international gateway and at the hub of rail, road and water transportation systems;
- its riverfront;
- a diverse population with a strong Hispanic community;
- residents who are committed to the area and its future as a place to live;
- strong community-based development organizations, with successful track records in housing and economic/business development; and
- an economy with significant buying power, as demonstrated by the 1997 Community Income and Expenditures study (prepared by Michigan State University's Center for Urban Affairs).

Cluster 5 stakeholders have identified opportunities to capitalize on the power of the Cluster economy and the benefits of its location in the transportation network by targeting neighborhood commercial reinvestment to:

- capture retail expenditures from the huge volume of truck traffic which passes through the area;
- create regional tourism attractions at the Mexicantown Welcome Center, at Fort Wayne and by developing an innovative re-use plan for the Tiger Stadium/Michigan Central Station area on Michigan Avenue; and
- meet the retail and service needs of area residents and businesses by revitalizing areas with a traditional "main street" pattern of development, as well as identifying locations for new, neighborhood shopping centers which can accommodate larger footprint users.

Stakeholders have also identified priorities for improving Cluster 5 as a community in which to live by:

- protecting neighborhoods where housing conditions are good and values are stable;

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- reinforcing and building on the success of housing improvement efforts which are already planned and underway; and
- supporting the formation of community-based housing development organizations in areas where housing improvements are needed.

While stakeholders give highest priority to providing quality housing (both new and rehab'd) affordable to low and moderate income households, they also want to promote a mix of incomes within the Cluster by providing housing attractive to middle income households, including an investigation of the feasibility of constructing housing on the riverfront between Riverside Park and Ft. Wayne. To accomplish these housing reinvestment goals, public infrastructure investments and public service improvements must be carefully coordinated with housing investments in target areas. In addition, truck traffic must be reduced in residential areas.

Improving environmental quality within the Cluster by more effectively addressing the legacy of problems created by industrial use and the loss of housing stock are critical components of Cluster 5's strategic plan. Stakeholders reject the idea that southwest Detroit's riverfront should continue to be used as the location of choice for industries presenting a high risk of environmental damage. Their priorities for the next 5 - 10 years include improvements to air quality, the continued clean-up of contaminated sites, and promoting environmentally responsible industrial and light industrial development in carefully planned and attractively landscaped business park settings. One of their highest priority goals is to re-balance land use on the riverfront to increase public access and enjoyment and to link Ft. Wayne to the downtown riverfront and the Rouge River corridor. In addition, stakeholders propose investigating the feasibility of a mixed use development approach for the Delray area (west of Livernois) to include well designed and landscaped business parks, as well as housing rehab and infill in selected areas.

Stakeholders have also given high priority to the development of partnerships with area corporations, educational institutions and training organizations to provide apprenticeship and job training programs in skilled manufacturing and construction trades, as well as entrepreneurship and small business development programs. Job training is also a priority for youth development. In addition, stakeholders have emphasized the importance of devoting significantly

increased resources to maintain and improve existing parks and recreation centers, create new parks, and improve and expand library services as critical initiatives for improving the neighborhood quality of life for young people.

Stakeholders noted that, in many cases, funds dedicated to programs and projects in southwest Detroit remain unspent and request that these funds be reprogrammed for use in the originally targeted areas to help achieve the reinvestment recommendations presented in this report.

## **PRIORITY REINVESTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Neighborhood Commercial**

#### **“Main Street” Style Commercial**

Encourage reinvestment in areas with a traditional “main street” character of development by encouraging the consolidation of viable neighborhood commercial uses in these areas and enhancing the quality of their pedestrian environment.

- Bagley/Mexicantown
- Vernor, Livernois to Junction
- Vernor, Woodmere to Central
- Michigan Avenue, west of Livernois to Central at selected locations

#### **New, Neighborhood Serving Shopping Centers**

Encourage the development of new, smaller neighborhood-serving shopping centers:

- on the DPW Yard at Livernois and Vernor (by supporting the current efforts of the Southwest Detroit Business Association and a private developer to relocate the DPW Yard and identify resources for environmental remediation); and
- along Fort at or near Schaefer or Visger in the Boynton/Southpointe area.

#### **Tourism**

Capitalize on Cluster 5’s international gateway location, proximity to downtown and ethnic diversity to capture tourist dollars by:

- focusing reinvestment efforts on Mexicantown (including marketing and retail programs celebrating Latino culture) and its Welcome Center;
- developing an innovative re-use plan (with community participation) to create a regional attraction on Michigan Avenue between I-96 and the Lodge (including Tiger Stadium and the Michigan Central Station); and
- encouraging the location of a temporary riverboat casino at the Revere Copper and Brass site (adjacent to Ft. Wayne), with revenues dedicated to implementing a re-use plan for Ft. Wayne, prepared with community participation.

## Housing

### Quality Affordable Housing

Give the highest priority to providing quality housing (both new and rehab'd) affordable to low and moderate income households, while also providing housing affordable and attractive to middle income households. Promote a mix of incomes within Cluster communities.

### Coordinated Infrastructure Investments

Work with the City to coordinate improved City services and infrastructure investments (utility and street lighting upgrades, road and sidewalk improvements, parks, libraries, etc.) with housing investments in target areas.

### Housing Improvement Efforts

Support all community-based efforts to maintain and strengthen neighborhoods, targeting programs and resources appropriate to each area's condition and/or stage of organizational development.

- a. Maintain the stability of the area's "strong" neighborhoods (see Housing Condition Survey), including:
  - the northwest corner of the Cluster;
  - the southwest corner of the Cluster (Boynton/Southpointe area); and
  - the area between Livernois and Clark from I-75 to Toledo.

The following sample programs/strategies would be appropriate in such neighborhoods:

- strengthen neighborhood organizations; community building activities (Clean Sweep/Spring Clean-up, community gardening/greening projects, parties/picnics, etc.);

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- spot demolition;
  - low interest home repair and improvement loans;
  - concentrated code enforcement activity;
  - crime watch; community policing; and
  - infrastructure improvements (road paving, street lights, parks, etc.)
- b. Reinforce the success of housing initiatives already planned and underway, including:
- the area to the north of Michigan Avenue between 31<sup>st</sup> and 28th Street (Jeremiah Project/Newberry Estates);
  - Corktown;
  - the area between Vernor and I-75 (south) from Clark to I-75 (east) (Bagley Housing Association Homes at St. Anne's and St. Anne's Gate);
  - the SWAN "Block Club" area east of Livernois;
  - the Core City Neighborhoods area, north of Michigan Avenue and east of West Grand Boulevard; and
  - the All Saints area south of Longworth from Woodmere to Central.

The following sample programs/strategies which would be appropriate in such neighborhoods:

All of the strategies listed above PLUS:

- strengthen non-profit housing development organizations
  - provide resources to support master planning and coordination among organizations;
  - tax incentives (freeze or forgiveness on improvement value);
  - low interest rehab loans;
  - Home Buyers Club and affordable-interest mortgages (with low down payment, low fees and flexible underwriting);
  - subsidies for housing rehab and infill/new construction; and
  - transfer of city-owned surplus properties to qualified community-based housing development organizations.
- c. Build the capacity of new community-based development organizations to encourage the expansion of housing improvement initiatives in the following areas:

- north of Michigan Avenue between Junction and West Grand Boulevard;
- north of Toledo between Livernois and West Grand Boulevard; and
- north and south of Vernor between Central and Woodmere Cemetery/Patton Park.

## Job Centers

### Cluster-based Business Development Organization

Establish a consortium of cluster-based organizations (both for profit and non-profit) devoted to working with the City (and the Empowerment and Renaissance Zone Boards) to:

- assemble land in a manner that deals fairly with residents;
- provide development incentives;
- facilitate access to financing;
- cut red tape;
- market Cluster 5 as a desirable/competitive jobs location; and
- screen prospective industries/employers for environmentally responsible practices.

This organization should also work with corporations/industries already based in the area to:

- encourage job expansion;
- collaborate in developing job training programs for area residents;
- promote the hiring of area residents;
- cooperate in improving the area housing stock to provide close-to-work living opportunities for employees; and
- collaborate with other programs/businesses to provide affordable, quality daycare.

The board of this organization should include local residents and business owners. The organization should address both Neighborhood Commercial and Job Center issues/initiatives.

### Intermodal, International Gateway

Capitalize on the area's unique combination of road, rail and water access, and its role as an international gateway, in attracting new and expanding existing jobs, for example:

- encourage Port and port-related industry expansion;
- actively pursue the development of an intermodal terminal at the Conrail site; and

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- promote the development/location of import/export (and trade brokering) firms in the area.

## **Job Training and Retraining**

Give high priority to expanding and coordinating the efforts of job training and retraining centers in the Cluster, and enhancing job referral services, to serve area and City residents.

- Capitalize on, more effectively coordinate and improve outreach by existing programs such as JTPA and the Empowerment Zone Job Net.
- Develop a skilled manufacturing and construction trades training center, approved and co-funded by the US Department of Labor to ensure that "graduates" obtain journeymen cards.
- Develop partnerships with area corporations and local, state and national educational institutions and training organizations to design and implement training programs, provide on-the-job apprenticeships and give job training graduates a direct link to employers/employment.
- Develop and fund apprenticeship programs in housing repair, rehab and new construction working in partnership with private companies and non-profit programs (such as Habitat for Humanity).
- Expand/improve entrepreneur development programs to support start-up businesses of all types.
- Develop an environmental technician training program.
- Encourage the selection of residents/stakeholders to serve on the Boards of training centers located in the Cluster.

## **Transportation**

### **Truck Traffic**

Solve problems related to truck traffic in residential (and selected neighborhood commercial) areas, recognizing that the Ambassador Bridge gateway improvement project (anticipated completion 2001) will significantly reduce truck traffic on surface streets.

- Support the Bridge gateway improvement project and ensure community participation in planning and decision-making.
- Evaluate the feasibility of using abandoned or low volume rail corridors as truck routes.
- Encourage trucks to use I-96 and Schaefer as north-south routes linking I-94 and I-75.

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- Review the costs and benefits of the existing ordinance prohibiting City designation and enforcement of truck routes; revise ordinance as necessary.
- Petition Council to post “no through trucks” signs on selected residential and neighborhood commercial streets.
- Post signs near schools limiting truck travel speed (e.g., 15 miles per hour).
- Designate and improve preferred truck routes (for example better pavement, wider turning radii, better signage) and work with area corporations to encourage their voluntary use.

## Transit

Improve public transit.

- Start with relatively low cost improvements to existing routes/ service to increase usability/ridership, for example, more reliable schedules, improved quality of maintenance, lighting and appearance at bus shelters/stops.
- Encourage increased bus use by allowing a single fare for multiple stops on the same route.
- Give priority to service improvements on major arterial streets linking to downtown and suburban job locations, as well as job concentrations within the Cluster.
- Investigate the feasibility of alternatives to buses (e.g., light rail) to improve regional transit service and increase ridership.
- Encourage the development of a multimodal/multi-use transfer terminal providing access to suburban bus links, downtown routes, rail service, ferry service and providing park-and ride facilities, day care and other services at a single site.
- Strongly encourage the expanded use of shuttle buses sponsored by businesses/corporations, licensed entrepreneurs and non-profits to enhance access to jobs, job training, day care, etc.
- Request that DDOT and SMART survey area transit users to help identify their highest priority transit improvements; consult with transit planning experts to identify the investments which would best enhance service to meet Cluster needs.

## Auto Insurance

Collaborate with the City to develop a strategy for reducing auto insurance rates in the Cluster and Detroit.

- Investigate equity in setting rates in Detroit and suburban locations.



- Identify and independently measure those factors which contribute to higher rates.
- Reduce the incidence of those factors (e.g., unrecovered car thefts, accident rates).
- Ask for/increase City representation on the State Insurance Commission.

## Environment

### Riverfront/Greenway Linkages

Protect and expand green space and public access on the riverfront and link neighborhoods to the river with greenways and walk and bike routes.

- Limit new industry on the riverfront to water-dependent (shipping) uses and negotiate with new and existing owners to allow public access to and along the riverfront.
- Involve community representatives in developing an innovative re-use plan for Ft. Wayne.
- Support designation as a Heritage River.
- Create a green promenade linking downtown to the southwest Detroit riverfront by capping and grassing contaminated sites (use casino revenues earmarked for this recreation/tourism related purpose) and interpret Detroit's industrial history with markers, displays, etc. (Detroit: We changed the world!)
- Devise strategies for increasing open space that guarantee adequate maintenance while protecting public access.
- Propose the docking of a temporary riverboat casino at the Revere Copper site to the east of Ft. Wayne.

### Cement Silos

Do not relocate the LaFarge and Medusa cement operations from the East Riverfront to the southwest Detroit riverfront. Instead, encourage:

- the clean-up of brownfield sites and improved air quality;
- increased open space and public access;
- water dependent uses and non-polluting light industry;
- an investigation of the feasibility of riverfront housing; and
- investors committed to these goals and continuing area improvement.

The Delray United Action Council is firmly opposed to the relocation of cement operations to the Southwest Detroit riverfront.

## **Injection Wells**

Prohibit the new construction, reactivating or expansion of injection wells for toxic waste on the riverfront.

## **Youth Development Job Training**

Create partnerships between community groups, corporations/businesses, unions and educational institutions (including vocational education centers) to create meaningful job opportunities for Cluster youth.

- Identify sources of increased funding for job training and placement assistance; provide grant writing workshops/assistance.
- Stress job training internships, apprenticeships and other opportunities for on-the-job training in a variety of industries and trades (including home repair, rehab and new construction). (See Job Centers.)
- Encourage job providers to assist in making transportation to job sites available.
- Expand the range of daycare options available to enable young parents to participate in job training and job programs (for example, by certifying grandparents and/or relatives as daycare providers).

## **Parks and Recreation Centers**

Increase City resources devoted to maintaining and upgrading existing parks and recreation centers and building new parks.

- Provide funding to improve recreation facilities available for public use at Ft. Wayne; increase public access.
- Seek partnerships with existing and new business and industry in improving and expanding parks and recreation facilities.

## **Libraries**

Devote significantly increased resources to libraries as institutions with a key role to play in education, youth development and neighborhood quality of life.

- Renovate and re-open existing libraries.
- Add new libraries.
- Expand service hours.
- Provide enhanced learning resources (books, films, inter-library loan programs, etc.).
- Enhance access to computers/information technology.